

Summary of the Case (from the Inquiry Brief)
Davis & Elkins College
Teacher Education Program¹
Audit Dates: March 30 – 31, 2006

The Summary of the Case is written by the auditors and approved by program faculty. The Summary reflects the auditors' understanding of the case the faculty are making for accreditation.

Authorship and Approval of the *Inquiry Brief*:

The *Inquiry Brief* was written by Heather Roberts Biola, and Steven Bryan Creasey, and was approved by the Teacher Education Program faculty on November 15, 2005.

Introduction:

Davis & Elkins College, founded in 1904 and known as D&E, is a small, private, liberal arts college located in the Potomac Highlands of West Virginia and was named for its two principal benefactors, Senators Henry Gassaway Davis and Stephen Benton Elkins. The college is affiliated with the Presbyterian Church U. S. A.

The mission of D&E is to provide personalized undergraduate education rooted in a liberal arts education that values breadth and depth of learning and affirms the importance of both tradition and experimentation. The College strives to promote the Judeo-Christian traditions that include free pursuit of knowledge and truth, human dignity, compassion, mutual support, justice and social responsibility. It affirms a special value of participatory governance and the unity of the intellectual, social, and spiritual dimensions of life.

The Department of Education, one of 12 D&E departments, was established in 1917 and enrolls about 90 students in a degree program composed of the D&E general education program, an academic major in the teaching field (or its equivalent for elementary teachers), professional education courses, and field experiences throughout the program, culminating in student teaching. Presently, more than 100 D&E alumni serve in the Randolph County public school system and more, of course, in the other surrounding counties.

The mission of the program is to prepare competent, caring, and qualified elementary and secondary teachers, principally for schools in Appalachia, where the "culture of poverty" is pervasive. The teacher education faculty adopted a *constructivist approach* overall, but balanced it with direct instruction approaches in certain pedagogical situations.

Claims:

The authors of the Inquiry Brief make three primary claims about their

students' accomplishments that they also align with the three components of TEAC's Quality Principle I and with the West Virginia version of the INTASC standards.

1. Content Knowledge: Their graduates acquire a foundation knowledge of the liberal arts and the content knowledge in the subject areas they are prepared to teach.

2. Pedagogical Understanding: Their graduates understand a variety of pedagogical theories and research strategies that can be used to help children learn.

3. Caring Teaching: Their graduates know how to use technology, can plan, teach in a caring manner and assess their students' learning during public school field experiences.

Rationale for the assessments:

The faculty raised two research questions about their assessments – (1) did their measures assess what was covered in the program, and (2) did their assessments provide assurance that the graduates were competent, caring and qualified? The faculty attempted to answer these questions primarily by examining 50 of the program's most recent graduates (known as "the *nifty 50*"). They employed a system of multiple assessments at five points in the program –

- (1) Admission to the college (high school GPA, ACT or SAT scores)
- (2) Admission to the program (college GPA and Praxis I scores)
- (3) Admission to student teaching (college GPA and Praxis II scores)
- (4) Graduation and licensure (grade in student teaching, observation inventory, Praxis PLT, portfolio and video assessments)
- (5) Alumni performance (Graduate survey, Centennial Survey, and case studies of graduates)

With regard to their first claim, the faculty reasoned that if they were right, their graduates would:

- Earn a grade point average above 2.5 in both liberal arts and education courses
- Have a GPA as good or better than D&E students not in elementary education

- Have a GPA as good or better than D&E students in their secondary content area
- Pass the PRAXIS: Pre-professional Skills Test in Reading, Writing and Mathematics by West Virginia Department of Education standards
- Pass the PRAXIS II: Content Knowledge Tests according to WVDE standards
- Earn “acceptable” or “target” scores on the “Teaching Competencies” on the Davis & Elkins College Professional *Education Performance Observations Inventory* during student teaching. [see Appendix F]
- Include evidence of content knowledge in the portfolio under INTASC standard 1

With regard to their second claim, the faculty reasoned that if their claim were true, their graduates would

- Earn a GPA above 2.5 in pedagogy courses
- Exceed the passing score set by WVDE on the PRAXIS II, Principles of Learning and Teaching Test
- Be rated “acceptable” or “target” on all D&E *Observations Inventory* competencies
- Include evidence of pedagogical knowledge in a portfolio

With regard to their third claim, the faculty reasoned that their graduates could teach in a caring manner if the graduates would:

- Pass the PRAXIS II: Principles of Learning and Teaching Test
- Be rated “acceptable” or “target” on all D&E *Observations Inventory* competency items
- Show growth in a survey of students’ dispositions to care.

Results:

On the whole the faculty’s reasoning was supported with the following evidence:

1. Mean GPAs were well above 3.0 in all categories.
2. In the end all students Praxis test scores exceeded the state passing scores in all areas (80-85% on the first try) and the mean scores exceeded the state passing scores in all areas.
3. Surveys of graduates and the centennial survey of graduates yielded ratings over 4.0/5.0 and 3.0/4.0 respectively for items related to the claims.

4. The observation inventory of performance in student teaching yielded ratings in all categories associated with the INTASC standards that exceeded 2.5/3.0.

5. Caring dispositions grew from 89% levels of agreement with scenarios that embodied caring to 94%.

6. One-hundred percent of the student teachers earned acceptable ratings for their portfolios with 78.5% earning the highest rating.

Internal audit:

The internal audit was conducted by Judie Smith, Assistant Professor of Psychology and Education; Judith McCauley, Adjunct Instructor of Special Education; Dr. Mary Ann DeLuca, Assistant Professor of Health & Physical Education; Dr. Steven Creasey, Professor of Education; Dr. Heather Biola, Assistant Professor of Education; Ann Harris, Education Department Secretary and Certification Analyst.

They chose five students at random [10% of the total number] and found that the students took courses that were consistent with the college catalog and met all of the requirements imposed by the State of West Virginia for certification. All five of the students had at least four Observation Inventories from their student teaching experience on file. With very few exceptions all course syllabi included the required experiential learning component and other requirements (lesson on health). A comparison between catalog course descriptions and actual practice revealed several inconsistencies, however, owing to the dean favoring older course descriptions instead of recent ones. Student grades and actual records were compatible with one another, with only one student's report reflecting a different grade in EDUC 220.

Facilities for all courses taught seemed to be adequate with weaknesses in storage space and lack of air conditioning. Student feedback functioned only informally. Student complaints are heard but no written complaint has been collected in the past five years.

Commitment:

The Internal Audit Committee determined that there is adequate institutional commitment to the Education Department and presented several lines of data supporting this claim.

¹ **The program includes options in the following areas and West Virginia, following to its own policies and regulations, may grant teaching licenses in these areas to the program's graduates:**

Biology, 9-Adult; Business Education, 5-Adult; Chemistry, 9-Adult; Elementary Education, K-6; English, 5-Adult and 5-9; General Science, 5-Adult and 5-9; Health, PreK-Adult; Mathematics, 5-Adult and 5-9; Music, PreK-Adult; Physical Education, PreK-Adult; Spanish, PreK-Adult and 5-9; Social Studies, 5-Adult and 5-9; Theatre Education, PreK-Adult.